AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #312

BOOK THREE: Fire
CHAPTER TWELVE: "The Western Air Temple"

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ACT ONE

EXT. CANYON RIM - DAY

Aang, Katara, Sokka and Toph are now joined by Teo, Haru, and the Duke. Together they all trudge beside Appa along the top of a canyon. A sense of defeat still hangs over the group after their drubbing in the attack on the Fire Nation.

KATARA
This is humiliating.

SOKKA
Do you mean getting thoroughly spanked by the Fire Nation, or having to walk all the way to the Western Air Temple?

KATARA
Both.

AANG
Sorry guys, but Appa gets tired carrying all these people.

APPA
(TIRED BELLOW)

TEO
I wonder how the rest of the troops are.

HARU
They're probably on their way to a prison. It seems like my dad just got out, now he's going back in.

THE DUKE
I miss Pipsqueak.

SOKKA
I miss not having blisters on my feet.

Toph suddenly smiles. She stops walking.

TOPH
Hey, we're here! I can feel it!

Everyone looks around. There is no Air Temple to be seen!

KATARA
Uh... I think your feet need their eyes checked.

AANG
No, she's right. We are here.

TOPH
Wow. It's amazing!

Everyone seems confused. There's no temple in view, only an empty canyon rim.

EXT. CLIFF SIDE - SIMULTANEOUS

Zuko rappels down the side of the cliff, out of the kids' sight. He bounces off the side of the cliff a few times, then we WIDEN OUT reveal that built into the side of the cliff, upside down and bat-like, hang the spires of the Western Air Temple. Like the cliff dwellings of the Anasazi Indians, these structures have been carved from the stone of the canyon wall.

Zuko completes his descent and lands on the main terrace of the Western Air Temple. He takes a breath and looks around, thinking back. He's been here before…

FLASHBACK:

EXT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - DAY - 3 YEARS EARLIER

A younger version of Zuko, with a freshly bandaged eye, stands in the same location with Uncle. Zuko has his old determined, "find the Avatar and regain my honor" look in his eye. Meanwhile, Uncle takes in the incredible view.

UNCLE
What a stunning view.

ZUKO
The only view I'm interested in seeing is the Avatar in chains.

Uncle looks over at Zuko, concerned. The boy already shows signs of incredible strain.

UNCLE
You know the Avatar hasn't been seen for a hundred years. The chances of finding him here are very slim.

ZUKO
First we'll check each of the Air Temples. Then we'll scour the world, searching even the most remote locations until we find him.

UNCLE
Prince Zuko, it's only been a week since your banishment. You should take some time to heal and rest.

ZUKO
What else would I expect to hear from the laziest man in the Fire Nation?

He gives Uncle a withering look. Uncle just sighs. Zuko looks back over the commanding vista.

ZUKO
The only way to regain my honor is to find the Avatar. So I will.

END OF FLASHBACK.

EXT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - PRESENT

Zuko sinks into guilt for a moment, thinking about Uncle. Then he hears something. He looks up to see Toph and Aang descending the cliffside with the rest of the gang on an Earthbending elevator.

Zuko gives his rappelling rope a tug, bringing it down from the cliffside. Then he gathers it up and scampers away, leaping to a nearby terrace and making his escape.

As the gang arrives on the main terrace, Teo looks around at the Air Temple.

TEO
It's so different from the Northern Air Temple. I wonder if there are any secret rooms.

HARU
Let's go check it out.

Haru quickly Earthbends a ramp from the level they're on to a nearby hanging structure. Teo begins to head up the ramp, followed by the Duke, Haru, and Aang. But Katara grabs Aang, then turns to the extras.

KATARA
You guys go. I think we need to talk about some things.

TEO
I'll race you, Duke!

THE DUKE
I told you -- it's the Duke.

Teo, Haru, and the Duke go off to explore the temple. Aang looks dejected.

AANG
Why can't I go?

KATARA
(dryly understating)
We need to decide what we're going to do now, and since you're the Avatar, maybe you should be a part of this.

Aang sits down.

AANG
Fair enough. So what's the new plan?

Everyone thinks hard for a moment.

SOKKA
Well if you ask me, the new plan: is the old plan! You just need to master all four elements and confront the Firelord before the comet comes.

Aang has a harsh reaction to this.

AANG
(sarcastic)
Oh yeah, that's great. No problem. I'll just do that.

KATARA
Aang, no one said it's going to be easy.

AANG
Well, it's not even going to be possible. Where am I supposed to get a Firebending teacher?

KATARA
We could look for Jeong Jeong.

AANG
Yeah, right! Like we'll ever run into Jeong Jeong again.

TOPH
Who's-- oh, never mind. If it's important I'll find out.

They sit for a moment, thinking. Aang hops up and tries to change the subject.

AANG
(quickly)
Oh well, guess we can't come up with anybody! Why don't we just take a nice tour around the temple?

He pulls out his glider and takes off from the cliff. Momo follows him. The kids exchange confused looks about Aang's avoidance of talking about the future.

TOPH
What's up with him?

Sokka starts thinking again.

SOKKA
There's got to be someone who can teach him Firebending...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ZUKO'S CAMPSITE - DAY

Zuko looks straight into the camera, giving a sincere, but very awkward pitch about his virtues as a Firebending instructor.

ZUKO
Hello.
(little wave)
Zuko here. But I guess you probably already know me... sort of. So the thing is, I have a lot of Firebending experience, and I'm considered to be pretty good at it. Well, you've seen me -- you know, when I was attacking you.
(beat)
I guess I should apologize for that. But anyway, I'm good now -- I mean I thought I was good before but now I realize I was bad -- but anyway, I think it's time I joined your group and taught the Avatar Firebending.

He waits for an answer, and we PULL BACK TO REVEAL that Zuko is talking to a badgerfrog, a fuzzy, hopping Avatar animal that sits on a nearby stump. We're at Zuko's camp near the Air Temple, where he has constructed a tent out of his deflated war balloon. The badgerfrog just eyes him. Zuko loses his patience.

ZUKO
Well? What's your answer?!

His loud questioning scares the badgerfrog and it hops away. Zuko slumps in defeat.

ZUKO
Yeah, that's what I'd say, too.
(getting angry again)
How am I supposed to convince these people I'm on their side?
(rubbing his chin)
What would Uncle do?

He tries to get into Uncle's mindset.

ZUKO
(impersonating Uncle)
Zuko, you have to look within yourself to save yourself from your other self. Only then will your true self reveal itself.

He shakes his head and quits his Uncle speech in frustration.

ZUKO
Even when I'm talking for him, I can't figure out what he means.

He thinks for a second.

ZUKO
What would Azula do?
(impersonating Azula)
Listen, Avatar, I can join your group, or I can do something unspeakably horrible to you and your friends. Your choice. I guess I'm not that good at impersonations.

He shakes his head. He's no Azula. He takes a deep breath, then starts walking away from his camp.

EXT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - DAY

Aang and Momo fly through the Air Temple's obstacle course, a labyrinthine series of tunnels and overhanging rocks that dip in and out of the canyon side. Katara, Toph, and Sokka follow on Appa, trying to keep up.

KATARA
Aang, can we talk about you learning Firebending now?

AANG
(pretending not to hear)
What? The wind is too loud in my ears! Oh, check out this loop!

He goes into a barrel roll through a spiraling tunnel. They continue to fly through the course, catching up with Aang. Sokka tries to yell to him again.

SOKKA
Aang! I think we should be making some plans about our future.

AANG
Okay! We can do that while I show you the giant Pai Sho table.

The course leads back to the main terrace where they started. Aang lands his glider, Toph skates up to the terrace, and Sokka and Katara land Appa.

AANG
Oh, and you're gonna love the all-day echo chamber.

TOPH
I think that will have to wait.

She gestures behind them, and they all turn to find the last person in the world they expect to see stepping out of the darkness of a cave: Zuko!

ZUKO
Hello.
(little wave)
Zuko here.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - DAY

The kids are in defensive poses, ready to defend themselves against Zuko. Zuko just stands awkwardly for a moment, then waves lamely to them.

ZUKO
Hey. I heard you guys flying around down there, so I just thought I'd wait for you here.

While the kids look suspicious, waiting for him to make his move, Appa leaps toward him, knocking him to the ground and licking him happily.

APPA
(HAPPY SLURPING NOISE)

Zuko tries his best to get out from under the fawning beast and maintain some dignity, but when Appa finally backs off, Zuko is covered in slimy spittle. Undeterred, he wipes off his face and begins his pitch.

ZUKO
I know you must be surprised to see me here--

SOKKA
Not really, since you've followed us all over the world.

ZUKO
(fumbling through)
Right. Well, uh... anyway, what I wanted to tell you about is that I've changed. And I, uh... I'm good now, and... Well, I think I should join your group. Oh, and I can teach Firebending.
(beat, looks at Aang)
To you.

Aang looks at Zuko uncomfortably, shocked into silence by the mention of Firebending. The rest of the group stands staring at Zuko, unsure how to respond. Zuko hems and haws, trying to figure out where to go from here.

ZUKO (cont'd)
See, I uh...

TOPH
You wanna what now?

KATARA
(enraged)
You can't possibly think that any of us would trust you, can you? I mean, how stupid do you think we are?

SOKKA
Yeah! All you've ever done is try to hunt us down and capture Aang!

He looks over at Aang, who is still not responding.

ZUKO
(frustrated)
I have done some good things! I mean, I could have stolen your bison in Ba Sing Se, but I set him free. That's something.

Toph indicates Appa.

TOPH
Appa does seem to like him.

Sokka looks at Appa, suspicious.

SOKKA
He probably just covered himself in honey or something so that Appa would lick him. I'm not buying it.

Zuko tries to plow ahead.

ZUKO
I can understand why you wouldn't trust me, and I know I've made some mistakes in the past--

SOKKA
Like when you attacked our village?

KATARA
Or when you stole my mother's necklace and used it to track us down and capture us?

Zuko takes a deep breath and tries to sound convincing.

ZUKO
Look, I admit I've done some awful things. I was wrong to try to capture you, and I'm sorry that I attacked the Water Tribe.

He looks so pathetic and regretful that it seems like he might be swaying the gang.

ZUKO (cont'd)
And I never should have sent that Fire Nation assassin after you. I'm going to try to stop--

Sokka, indignant, cuts him off after hearing this.

SOKKA
Wait, you sent Combustion Man after us?

Zuko realizes that he just flossed up to something they didn't know about, hurting his cause instead of helping it.

ZUKO
Well, that's not his name, but--

SOKKA
Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to insult your friend.

ZUKO
He's not my friend!

TOPH
That guy locked me and Katara in jail and tried to blow us all up!

Zuko sees that he's dug himself further into a hole. He turns to Aang, and appeals to him directly.

ZUKO
Why aren't you saying anything? You once said you thought we could be friends. You know I have good in me.

Aang stews for a moment, clearly conflicted. He looks around at his friends. Katara and Sokka have clearly made up their minds that Zuko is no good. Aang makes his decision.

AANG
(overly aggressive)
There's no way we can trust you after everything you've done. We'll never let you join us.

Katara nods. End of discussion.

KATARA
You need to get out of here. Now.

She looks like she's about to attack him. Zuko gets more flustered.

ZUKO
I'm trying to explain that I'm not that person any more!

No one is having it.

SOKKA
Either you leave, or we attack.

Zuko thinks for a moment, then GETS DOWN on his knees.

ZUKO
If you won't accept me as a friend, then maybe you'll take me as a prisoner.

He OFFERS UP his hands to be bound.

KATARA
No, we won't.

She Waterbends at Zuko, knocking him over.

KATARA
Get out of here and don't come back. And if we ever see you again... well, we'd better not see you again!

Zuko looks up at all of them standing over him menacingly. He decides it's time to retreat. He slowly stands, heads back to the cliff wall, and climbs up his rappelling rope. As he does, the kids watch, clearly still blown away by what just happened.

EXT. ZUKO'S CAMPSITE - LATER

Zuko is back at his camp, and he is ranting, upset with himself.

ZUKO
I can't believe how stupid I am! I mean, what was I thinking, telling them I sent an assassin after them?! Why didn't I just say Azula did that? They would've believed that! Stupid!

We widen to reveal he's ranting to the badgerfrog.

BADGERFROG
(AGREEING RIBBET)

Zuko slumps to the ground in despair.

EXT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - DAY

Sokka, Aang, Katara and Toph sit around their camp, discussing Zuko.

KATARA
Why would he try to fool us like that?

SOKKA
Obviously he wants to lead us into some kind of trap.

KATARA
This is just like when we were in prison together in Ba Sing Se. He starts talking about his mother, and making it seem like he's an actual human being with feelings.

SOKKA
He wants you to trust him and feel sorry for him so you let your guard down, then he strikes.

KATARA
The thing is, it worked. I did feel sorry for him. I felt like he was really confused and hurt. But obviously when the time came, he made his choice. And we paid the price.
(beat)
We can't trust him.

They sit for a moment, then Aang pipes up.

AANG
I kind of have a confession to make.

Everyone looks at him.

AANG
Remember when you two were sick, and I got captured by Zhao?

SOKKA
And you made us suck on frozen frogs? How could I forget? I had a wart on that flap that hangs down in the back of my throat for a month.

KATARA
Sokka, I looked at it and told you there was nothing there.

SOKKA
I could feel it! It's my throat-hole-flap!

AANG
(moving on)
Anyway, when Zhao had me chained up, it was Zuko who came in and got me out. He risked his life to save me.

Everyone has to think about this for a moment. Katara shakes her head. She's not buying it.

KATARA
No way -- I'm sure he only did it so he could capture you himself.

SOKKA
Yeah, face it, Aang, you're nothing but a big prize to him.

Aang nods.

AANG
Yeah. You're probably right.

KATARA
And what was all that crazy stuff about setting Appa free? What a liar!

TOPH
Actually, he wasn't lying.

Sokka rolls his eyes.

SOKKA
Oh, hooray. In a lifetime of evil, at least he didn't add animal cruelty to the list.

TOPH
I'm just saying that considering his messed up family, and how he was raised, he could have turned out a lot worse.

KATARA
(sarcastic)
You're right, Toph. Let's go find him and give him a medal. The "Not As Much of a Jerk As You Could Have Been Award".

Toph ignores her and shrugs.

TOPH
All I know is that while he was talking to us, he was sincere. Maybe you're all just letting your hurt feelings keep you from thinking clearly.

KATARA
Easy for you to say! You weren't there when he had us attacked by pirates!

SOKKA
Or when he burned down Kyoshi Island!

AANG
Or when he tried to capture me at the Fire Temple!

Toph doesn't respond, but Katara is furious.

KATARA
Why would you even try to defend him?

Toph finally lets them have it.

TOPH
Because, Katara, you're all ignoring one crucial fact! Aang needs a Firebending teacher. We can't think of a single person in the world to do the job. Now one shows up on a silver platter, and you won't even think about it?!

They all sit for a moment, letting this sink in. Finally, Aang shakes his head.

AANG
I'm not having Zuko as my teacher.

SOKKA
(backing him up)
You're darn right you're not, buddy.

Katara nods sanctimoniously.

KATARA
Well, I guess that's settled.

Toph stands up in huff.

TOPH
I'm beginning to wonder who's really the blind one around here.

She storms off, leaving the kids to think about what she's said.

EXT. ZUKO'S CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Zuko sleeps at his camp. A little campfire flickers nearby. There's a RUSTLING in the bushes by his camp, and Zuko stirs in his sleep. Zuko jerks awake, STARTLED.

ZUKO
Who's there?

He hears more RUSTLING, getting closer.

ZUKO
Stay back!

TOPH (O.S.)
It's me...

Not thinking, cobwebs still in his eyes, Zuko sends a fire blast into the darkness where the voice came from.

The fire illuminates Toph for a split second, then ignites some dry brush behind her. She stumbles backwards, stepping into it.

TOPH
(SCREAM OF MILD DISCOMFORT)

Toph falls down and crawls away from the fire.

TOPH
You burned my feet!

Zuko realizes what a horrible mistake he just made and he starts to run toward Toph.

ZUKO
I'm sorry! It was a mistake!

Confused, angry, and unable to trust him anymore, Toph starts Earthbending wildly at Zuko. But because her feet are burned, she can't "see" as well as she usually does, and she sends rocks flying around wildly.

TOPH
Get away from me!

Zuko ducks and dives, weaving through the flying rocks toward Toph.

ZUKO
Let me help you! I'm sorry!

He manages to make it to Toph, but she bats him away, still chucking rocks wildly.

TOPH
Get off me! Get off me!

She's too much for Zuko to handle, and he has to let her go. She crawls away as quickly as she can with her burnt feet while Zuko yells after her.

ZUKO
I didn't know it was you! Come back!

Toph keeps crawling away from him, shooting rocks around wildly. As she creeps out of sight, Zuko explodes.

ZUKO
(wildly frustrated)
Why am I so bad at being good?!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - NEXT MORNING

Aang, Sokka, Haru, Teo and the Duke are waking up and coming out of the various caves and rooms they've slept in at the Air Temple. Everyone gathers around the fire that's going on the main terrace, where Katara is fixing some breakfast. She looks around, a little concerned.

KATARA
Has anyone seen Toph?

SOKKA
I haven't seen her since she stormed off yesterday.

HARU
Maybe she's just exploring the Air Temple. There are some pretty fun spots to practice Earthbending.

KATARA
I think we should go look for her.

SOKKA
Aw, let her have fun with her rocks. I'm in no rush to have her yelling at us again.

THE DUKE
We can go check for her.

TEO
Yeah, I want to ride that tunnel down to the hall of statues again. It'll work a lot better now that I fixed my brakes.

We notice that Teo has a bandage on his head as he points to some newly fixed brakes on his wheelchair. Teo, the Duke and Haru head off to look for Toph.

As soon as they disappear, the rest of the kids hear a rumbling sound at the top of the canyon. They look up to see Toph lying down on her Earthbending elevator. As she reaches their level, she crawls toward them on her hands and knees. The kids run to her, concerned.

KATARA
Toph! What happened?

Toph slumps to the ground, exhausted.

TOPH
My feet got burned!

She shows them her burned feet, and Katara quickly whips up some water to put on them.

KATARA
Oh no! What happened?

TOPH
I just told you, my feet got burned!

KATARA
I meant how.

TOPH
Well, I kind of went to see Zuko last night...

Everyone is shocked.

AANG / KATARA / SOKKA
You what? / Zuko! / (SURPRISED 'BOINGING' SOUND)

TOPH
I just thought he could be helpful to us -- and if I talked to him, maybe we could work something out.

SOKKA
So he attacked you!

TOPH
(sticking up for Zuko)
Well, he did and he didn't. It was sort of an accident.

AANG
But... he did Firebend at you.

Toph sighs.

TOPH
Yes.

SOKKA
See! You trusted Zuko, and you got burned. Literally.

Katara looks at Toph's feet, trying to heal them.

KATARA
It's going to take a while for your feet to get better. I wish I could have worked on them sooner.

TOPH
Yeah, me too.

Katara gets a bowl of water for Toph to soak in. Sokka turns to Aang.

SOKKA
Zuko's clearly too dangerous to be left alone. We're going to have to go after him.

Aang nods.

AANG
I hate to go looking for a fight, but you're right. After what he did to Toph, I don't think we have a choice.

SOKKA
He's crafty, but we'll find a way to capture him.

TOPH
Maybe just invite him back here. He already offered himself up as a prisoner once.

Sokka nods, happily planning.

SOKKA
Yeah, get him to come back and say he'll be our prisoner... then we'll jump him and <u>really</u> make him our prisoner! He'll never suspect it!

KATARA
You are a master of surprise, Sokka.

Toph relaxes as her feet soak in the soothing water.

TOPH
Ah, that's the stuff.
(beat)
Now I know how the rest of you guys feel. Not being able to see with your feet stinks.

As the kids gather around Toph we PAN UP TO SEE...

EXT. CANYON RIM - SIMULTANEOUS

Combustion Man stands right there above them, totally undetected!

COMBUSTION MAN'S POV

He waits patiently, trying to line up the perfect shot on the Avatar -- like a sharpshooter carefully aligning his sites on his target. But every time he's about to get a clear shot, Sokka or Katara unwittingly walks in front of Aang, blocking him. Finally, the view to Aang opens up.

BACK TO NORMAL VIEW OF COMBUSTION MAN

Combustion Man inhales, about to strike... But suddenly he's KNOCKED OFF BALANCE by Zuko! His shot goes wildly off into the air.

ZUKO
Stop! I don't want you hunting the Avatar anymore!

COMBUSTION MAN
(UNINTELLIGIBLE GRUMBLING)

Combustion Man pushes Zuko aside and tries to get back to shooting the Avatar, but Zuko tackles him.

ZUKO
The mission is off! I'm ordering you to stop!

Combustion Man looks at him, his third eye crackling. Zuko ducks away just as burst of fire shoots out at him.

ZUKO
If you keep attacking, I won't pay you!

Combustion Man fires at him again, but Zuko Firebends the blast away.

ZUKO
All right, I'll pay you double to stop!

Again Combustion Man shoots at him, and this time the blast sends Zuko tumbling off the edge of the cliff. He manages to catch himself, and starts scurrying down the cliff face toward the kids.

The kids are now looking up at Combustion Man fighting with Zuko. Katara Waterbends at Combustion Man, and he ducks away. But he quickly pokes his head back over to take another shot. Zuko tries to Firebend at him, but in doing so, he loses his grip on the cliff and starts to fall -- but before he can hit bottom, Aang whips up an air cushion to break his fall. Zuko quickly pops up and all the kids fire back at Combustion Man. Combustion Man sends another blast at them, and they feel the rock beneath their feet shake.

TOPH
He's going to blast this whole place right off the cliffside!

The kids squeeze up against the cliff face, trying to give themselves as much cover from Combustion Man's attacks as possible. But he keeps blasting away at them, and the edge of their terrace starts to erode away, falling off into space.

KATARA
I can't step out to Waterbend at him without getting blown up. And I can't get a good enough angle on him from down here!

Sokka gets an idea.

SOKKA
I know how to get an angle on him.

He pulls out his boomerang.

SOKKA
(to his boomerang)
All right, buddy, don't fail me now.

He looks up, judging the distance to the top of the cliff, then KISSES his boomerang and throws it out and away from the cliffside. It looks like it's going off into the sky, but then it makes its slow, looping arc, turning back toward the top of the cliff, back toward Combustion Man.

The boomerang flies at Combustion Man, who's looking down at the kids, and catches him right in his third eye, knocking him to the ground. Combustion Man lies still for a second as the dust settles around him.

SOKKA
(excited)
Yeah! Boomerang!

But after a long beat, Combustion Man sits up, looking dazed. He gets to his feet, looking woozy... he stands up, still looking confused and a bit unstable on his feet.

SOKKA
(horribly disappointed)
Awww! Boomerang!

Combustion Man, now discombobulated, fires another shot. POP! POP! BOOM! The boomerang's blow to his third eye has caused an internal Combustion Man malfunction, and an incredible explosion MISFIRES, blowing Combustion Man to smithereens and off the top of the cliff, sending a rock-slide down on the kids. Toph manages to create a protective shell to protect them, and they watch Combustion Man and the debris fly off the cliff and plummet down, down, down to who knows where, his metal arm bouncing down the mountain. Thus ends Combustion Man, defeated for all time. (NOTE: As usual, this powerful and dramatic scene will be depicted and storyboarded tactfully and appropriately.)

All the kids stand for a moment, a little dazed that Combustion Man just took a header off a cliff. Equally mind-blowing is the fact that Zuko probably just saved Aang's life. The kids all trade looks, unsure what to say.

AANG
I can't believe I'm saying this, but thanks, Zuko.

SOKKA
Hey, what about me? I did the boomerang thing.

After a few pregnant pauses, Zuko steps up.

ZUKO
Listen, I know I didn't explain myself very well yesterday.

All the kids look at him, waiting to see what he has to say for himself. He takes a deep breath and continues.

ZUKO
I've been through a lot in the past few years, and it's been hard. But I'm realizing that I had to go through all those things to learn the truth. I thought that I had lost my honor, and that somehow my father could return it to me.
(MORE)

ZUKO (cont'd)
But I know now that no one can give you your honor, it's something you earn for yourself by choosing to do what's right.

He turns to Aang.

ZUKO
All I want now is to play my part in ending this war. And I know my destiny is to help you restore balance to the world.

He turns to Toph.

ZUKO
(to Toph)
I'm sorry for what I did to you. It was an accident. Fire can be dangerous and wild -- so as a Firebender, I need to be more careful and control my bending so I don't hurt people unintentionally.

He bows to her, and she nods back. His speech hits home with Aang.

AANG
I think you <u>are</u> supposed to be my Firebending teacher.

This brings a slight gasp of surprise from the rest of the group.

AANG
When I first tried to learn Firebending, I burned Katara, and after that I never wanted to Firebend again. But now I know you understand how easy it is hurt the people you love.
(bowing to Zuko)
I'd like you to teach me.

None of Aang's pals can believe that this is going down. But Zuko breathes a sigh of relief, and actually smiles. He's finally made it.

ZUKO
Thank you. I'm so happy you've accepted me into your group.

Aang holds up a hand.

AANG
Not so fast. I still have to ask my friends if it's okay with them.

Zuko look around at the kids nervously. He knows there are still some hard feelings out there. Aang turns to Toph.

AANG
Toph, you're the one that Zuko burned, what do you think?

Toph shrugs.

TOPH
Go ahead and let him join. It'll give me plenty of time to get back at him for burning my feet.

She gives Zuko a "you're about to get hazed" look.

AANG
Sokka?

Sokka looks at Zuko, then shakes his head. He can't believe what he's about to say.

SOKKA
Hey, all I want is to defeat the Firelord. If you think this is the way to do it, then I'm all for it.

Zuko nods. Two down, one to go. Aang turns to Katara.

AANG
Katara?

Katara looks from Zuko to Aang, her face hard. A bead of sweat runs down Zuko's brow. She clearly doesn't want him around. She turns to Aang, very stiff and strained.

KATARA
I'll go along with whatever you think is right.

Zuko finally relaxes, overjoyed. He made it! The winning Zuko smile is back.

ZUKO
(overenthusiastic)
I won't let you down! I promise.

He looks around at the group, anxious to make these people his new friends. They still don't look like they're all that sure about him.

INT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE BEDROOM - LATER

Zuko has all his stuff, and Sokka leads him into an empty room in the Air Temple. He's awkwardly trying to talk to Zuko, unsure how to relate to this guy.

SOKKA
So, here you go. Home sweet home, I guess, you know, for now. Unpack, lunch... soon. Uh, welcome aboard? Yeah.

Zuko nods at him, and Sokka heads out of the little cave, where Aang is standing by the door.

SOKKA
(sotto, to Aang)
Okay, this is really, really weird.

Aang nods and they head away. Meanwhile, Zuko unpacks his things. As he does, he pulls out a picture of Uncle. He takes a moment to look at it, thinking back...

FLASHBACK:

EXT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE - 3 YEARS EARLIER

Young Zuko and Uncle sit on the canyon's ledge overlooking the Air Temple at sunset. Zuko looks grimly determined, fixed in his quest for honor.

ZUKO
If I have to, I will spend every day of the rest of my life hunting the Avatar. I know it's my destiny to capture him.

Uncle puts his hand on Zuko's shoulder reassuringly.

UNCLE
You know, Prince Zuko, destiny is a funny thing. You never know how things are going to work out, but if you keep an open mind and an open heart, I promise you will find your own destiny someday.

Zuko isn't ready to hear that. He just stares out at the canyon.

END OF FLASHBACK.

INT. WESTERN AIR TEMPLE BEDROOM - PRESENT

Zuko smiles, realizing that Uncle was right after all. But his reverie is broken by the sound of someone behind him. He turns to find Katara staring at him. The others are messing around the camp, not paying attention. She speaks in a low threatening voice, almost a growl.

KATARA
You might have everyone else here buying your--
(spitting the word)
--"transformation," but you and I both know how you've struggled with doing the right thing in the past.

She gets right up in his face.

KATARA
So let me tell you something right now. You make one step backward, one slip-up, give me one reason to think you might hurt Aang... and you won't have to worry about your destiny any more. Because I'll make sure your destiny ends right then and there. Permanently.

She turns and leaves before he can respond.

END OF SHOW